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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1045
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RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS PRIORITY
RUEHSW/AMEMBASSY BERN PRIORITY 0028
RUCOGCA/COMNAVBASE GUANTANAMO BAY CU PRIORITY
RUESDM/JTLO MIAMI FL PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L HAVANA 023624

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DEPT FOR WHA/PDA AND WHA/CCA

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TAGS: [CU](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#)

SUBJECT: RESTRICTIONS ON INTERNATIONAL PRESS

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Buddy Williams; reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1.(C) Summary and Comment: The Cuban Foreign Ministry International Press Center (CPI) distributed updated regulations governing foreign press in Cuba to international press representatives in December. The new regulations reiterate and elaborate much of the existing regulatory framework for entry and accreditation of international press, internalizing some of the lessons learned after July 31. While the substance of the regulations is largely not new, their timing is a further signal that the regime is preparing for the eventual announcement of Fidel Castro's death. In anticipation of an influx of international press when such an announcement is made, the regime will seek to control the message and keep a tight lid on foreign media. International media operating in Cuba see the new regulations as re-stating the rules of the game, including a pre-existing provision that press credentials can be withdrawn if reporting lacks objectivity.⁸ End Summary and Comment.

2.(C) The International Press Center (CPI) first issued revised regulations for foreign media on October 28, but did not formally convey them to most news organizations until mid-December. The new regulations replicate prior regulations issued in 1997, and further specify journalist visa and accreditation procedures. Given that a number of foreign journalists entered or attempted to enter Cuba after July 31 as tourists, the regulations restate the requirement for media representatives to enter on a journalist visa and now stipulate that they must apply at least 21 days in advance. The latter provision, if enforced, would effectively limit the ability of foreign media that is not already on the ground to descend upon Cuba after an announcement of Fidel Castro's death. A new provision targeting local staff of foreign media offices, who must be Cuban nationals or permanent residents, explicitly requires them to report and pay taxes on their income. Pre-existing limits on television media, prohibiting reporting for another news agency or loans of equipment, and restrictions on the import or use of any satellite equipment, are restated. The export of any film footage, audio-recording or photographs is also controlled.

3.(C) Most of the general provisions for foreign press reiterate preexisting regulations. Journalists are reminded that they must work in accordance with the norms and regulations of the host country. The new regulations repeat a key provision allowing the CPI to revoke journalist credentials of those who engage in inappropriate actions,

unethical journalistic conduct, or do not exercise
&objectivity8 in their reporting. They also elaborate the
CPI,s role as the sole clearinghouse for interview requests
and press interactions with the government and state
institutions and disallow direct contact with the same.

4.(C) The U.S. and international press stationed in Havana
took note of the timing of these revised regulations, but
shrugged at the substance. According to the Reuters bureau
chief, they were more or less nothing new. CNN agreed that
they simply codify or re-state pre-existing restrictions on
their reporting. The main, if rhetorical question, the press
is asking is &Why now?8 For its part, the regime is
certainly intending to exercise as strict control as possible
over the international media but it remains to be seen if it
can effectively do so when the time comes.

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